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WOMEN'S MARITAL SURNAME CHOICE AND THE RHETORICAL ACT

BY

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine whether surname choice of women who kept their name after marriage was a rhetorical choice. Five women provided a written narrative of their choice to retain their birth surname upon marriage. Investigators aimed to determine themes present in the narratives provided, and compare them to themes identified in previous studies. Analysis revealed evidence that the choice to keep their names was a rhetorical choice. Underlying this choice was the intent to be perceived as independent women with personal and professional identities. Pride in cultural and familial traditions was also apparent, as was a belief in non-traditional marital roles, an unwillingness to accept the ideographic role of “wife.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The word and concept of rhetoric is often misunderstood or misused by many people. We as a culture do not have a full awareness of what rhetoric truly is, or the power a rhetorician has when well trained in the use of rhetoric. To many rhetoric is a dirty word. A commonly heard phrase is “that’s just rhetoric,” without knowing what that statement really means. However, we encounter rhetoric, whether good or bad, powerful or ill-used, all the time. We ourselves even use rhetoric in our everyday lives without perhaps knowing this is the case. So, what is rhetoric? It is a term used in many different ways. Rhetoric was traditionally conceived of as discursive acts with persuasive intent, specifically speeches, debates, or in colloquial terms as getting on one’s soapbox. Campbell and Huxman (2003) generally define this view of rhetoric as “an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end” (p. 7). It is also the study of public address, again traditionally speeches and the like, or as Lucas (1993) writes “traditionally, of course, the study of public address meant the study of great speakers and speeches. Scholars in public address usually focused on the speaking careers of individual orators” (p. 179). Over time the definition and study of rhetoric and rhetorical acts, have expanded to include more than simply formal occasions of spoken acts. We can now include public protest, art, fiction, and a myriad of other examples of acts that can be interpreted as rhetorical (Zarefsky, 1993).

The study and use of rhetorical processes dates back to the ancient times of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Originally it was used to argue property rights, or to

correct perceived wrongs. Parties had the responsibility of arguing their own case before a court of opinion. Often the better rhetor would win, which created the need for teaching of and training in the practice of rhetorical presentation. The original need for rhetoric, therefore, resulted from a conflict between groups or individuals, an issue that arose due to threats to people's values (Campbell and Huxman, 2003). Rhetoric was used, and still is, to argue or state a position on some issue. This necessitates the need to agree on method, form, and quality judgment of the expression of the position, and an understanding of humans as rational creatures with the capacity to think and act logically; and assumes a form of society with a shared adoption of civic values of the state, as determined through public decision-making (Fisher, 1984).

Since the creation of the field of rhetoric by the ancient Greeks as the study of persuasion, it has grown to encompass more than the formalized opportunities to provide a point of view through argumentation and verbal presentation, as was said earlier. Rhetoric, still used in the dual sense of the *act* of persuasion and the *study* of persuasion, can now include "all of the processes by which people influence each other through symbols" (Campbell and Huxman, 2003, p. 7). This more inclusive definition of rhetorical processes as the use of symbols means that rhetoric can be expressed through the traditional acts of speech-giving and similar activities, but also that it can be achieved nonverbally by wearing a pink ribbon to symbolize support of research to fight breast cancer; at a sit-in to protest American involvement in the Vietnam War; through a written autobiography describing what inspired a person to become involved in the fight against slavery; or Lucy Stone keeping her name after she was married in the late 19th century as a sign of her belief in equality for women,

even after they marry and become a wife. Reinforcing this view of rhetorical action Campbell and Burkholder (1996) write, “rhetoric can refer to any use of symbols to influence others. That includes functions other than persuasion, such as interpersonal identification, confrontation, self-identification, alienation, and negotiation” (p. 3). A speech is a rhetorical act in the way that wearing a ribbon for a cause or Lucy Stone keeping her birth name after marriage is a rhetorical act. All of these examples are behavioral manifestations of a belief in a position, cause, value, or something else equally inspiring to the individual. These actions are pragmatic expressions employed to effect change in society. As Bitzer (1968) says, “rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself...” (p. 3). An act is not rhetorical if it does not intentionally serve to persuade or inform of a position on an issue.

The current acceptance of varied forms of rhetoric has certainly allowed for the study and understanding of a wider range of movements, beliefs, and modes of expression as they vary across societies, cultures, sub-cultures, and counter-cultures. Zarefsky (1993) draws this same conclusion when he writes, “By embracing a broader conception of public address and not reducing the term to formal oratory, our studies have enhanced the potential for understanding historical or rhetorical situations and for formulating theoretical generalizations” (p. 205). With this line of reasoning students of social movements and the rhetoric associated with the movement have more options of study, and the ability to look at a situation and rhetorical act from multiple perspectives. One such movement is the women’s movement, and one rhetorical act associated with that movement, as alluded to above, is marital name choice.

Review of the Literature

Marital Naming Choices

The vast majority of women change their last name upon marriage. It has been the choice of at least 95 percent of women in America over the last decade (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995, p.724). Of the five out of 100 marriages where a non-traditional choice occurs some of the women maintain the use of their birth name, while others choose to combine the birth name with the husband's surname. This can be attributed to the fact that "contemporary women have created multiple perspectives with which to view the world, and now choose from among the many options available for self, relational and cultural identity" (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 369). However, only a very small number of women choose an alternative to the traditional practice.

Although it has never been actually legally required that a woman take her husband's name upon marriage, it became common law practice for her to do so and was eventually interpreted to be the law. The practice can be traced back to eleventh century England, the time when surname use came into use (Suter, 2004). When the English began migrating to the new world their traditions came with them, hence the American practice of male surname use after marriage. As mentioned previously, the common law practice came to be viewed as the law, and women had no choice. The early feminists, such as Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, were among the first to publicly question the practice of "taking the husband's name." Lucy Stone challenged the perceived law of the required name change, and was able to remain Lucy Stone after marrying Henry Blackwell in 1855. Upon their marriage Ms. Stone and Mr. Blackwell published a statement of their opinion opposing the

disproportionate number of rights bestowed upon the husband after marriage. In part the statement said

we deem it a duty to declare that this act [marriage] on our part implies no sanction of, nor promise of voluntary obedience to such of the present laws of marriage as refuse to recognize the wife as an independent, rational being, while they confer upon the husband an injurious and unnatural superiority (Flexner, 1975, p. 64).

Both Ms. Stone and Mr. Blackwell believed that a woman ceasing to use her own name signified her giving up her identity, independence, and equal access to property rights. They were protesting what Johnson and Scheuble (1995) call “the patriarchal nature of marriage that is dominant in American society” (p. 724). This act helped to galvanize the fight for women’s equality in marriage, and the right to choose her own identity and expression of that identity after marriage.

It wasn’t until the 1970s that progress was made on the legal front in this fight for naming parity. Suter (2004) reports, “in 1972 the Maryland Court of Appeals upheld women’s common law right to use the name of their choice after marriage” (p. 58). The court in effect ruled that the perception that a woman was legally required to change her name after marriage was just that, perception, and not legally required. This was the beginning of states allowing women to make the choice instead of allowing for no choice. Women were allowed to keep their name, hyphenate, and change their name depending on their preference. Despite this progress the vast majority of women still choose to take their husbands’ names upon marriage. Johnson and Scheuble (1995) performed a cross-generational study in which they looked at the

trend in naming choices, curious to know if the older generation's choice of last name influenced the younger generation's decision. Of the women in the older generation, those who were already married in 1980, 1.4 percent had chosen a non-traditional naming option, whereas 4.7 percent of the generation married after 1980 made a non-traditional choice. These results do point toward a possible trend in the future (p. 727).

The study of women's choices of marital surnames is a relatively recent development in the field of Communication Studies; one of the foundational studies was published in the late 1980s. Marital naming choice studies have typically been limited to questions surrounding a woman's identity as well as how women are perceived based on the name they choose to use after marriage (Foss & Edson, 1989; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Stafford & Kline, 1996; Twenge, 1997).

In feminist and Freudian studies identity is understood to be nearly synonymous with name. Names are seen as integral ingredients to personality (Stafford & Kline, 1996). This understanding follows in the vein of "would a rose by any other name smell as sweet?" The assumption from this point of view is that a person's last name is a key to his or her identity, therefore, it is theorized, when a woman changes her name upon marriage her sense of self and very identity change along with the name. Furthering this line of reasoning with an eye toward rhetoric, Campbell and Burkholder (1996) speak of the process of naming generally by stating "an important dimension of language is naming, the process by which individuals notice, recognize, and label certain elements or qualities in themselves and in the world around them" (p. 10). In this statement they are referring to the naming of anything from objects to phenomena. It also applies to how one labels the self, the

referential label that is chosen after a life-changing event. The name one chooses may say a lot about the individual, how she perceives herself, her place in the relationship, family, and larger context. One study of messages in marital naming choices found “strong differences in world view that emerged...suggesting that name choices provide important clues to women’s identities” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 367).

Single studies have branched out and looked at the role of tradition in women’s marital surname choice (Suter, 2004), and generational comparison (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995). Certainly, it is a fascinating topic to those interested in women’s issues, identity, perception, and a possibility for many other areas of interest.

Studies on this topic classify participants into three categories, although they have varying qualifiers for each category (for example, women who move their birth name to a middle name are sometimes name-combiners and sometimes name-changers). For purposes of consistency and simplicity the three categories will be referred to as follows throughout this document: Name-changers, women who take the husbands’ last name after marriage; Name-combiners, women who hyphenate their birth name and that of their husband; and Name-keepers, women who continue the use of their birth name following marriage. Foss and Edson (1989) used these same labels in their study.

One of the original studies is the Foss and Edson 1989 study in which the authors collected written accounts of women’s last name choice and analyzed the accounts for recurring themes that “would provide clues about the theories to which the three groups of women subscribe” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 360). They found in all accounts three themes were present, albeit at different levels of priority for each

population. The three themes related to concerns about the self, relationship, and cultural/societal expectations. Their prioritizing of the themes reveals information about their world-views and philosophies as pertain to each theme.

Name-changers, women who changed their last name to that of their husband, prioritized the themes as relationship, cultural expectation, and self. Foss and Edson report “for many of the women in this sample, having their husbands’ names identifies them as ‘a team, a single unit,’ as ‘belonging to someone’” (p. 360). Statements such as these highlight these women’s view that the relationship is of primary concern when they decide to take their husbands’ surnames. They looked forward to the coming together into one identity, the creation of a singular family unit, separating from the family they are leaving to marry into another. Of secondary importance is cultural expectation. Women in this study were shown to believe that marriage is a “special, all-inclusive state that demands accommodations and adjustments in order to play the role properly” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 362), in this case changing their last name. According to these women it is just the thing that is done, regardless. Name-changers chalk it up to custom and tradition. Agreement to marriage equals agreement to the conveniences and inconveniences that accompany it. This group’s references to the theme of self revealed that these women saw their married name as an adult name, viewing marriage as the door to adulthood; or they claimed no attachment to their own name, feeling it to be boring, or cumbersome. This final theme was of the least importance to them.

Name-keepers, on the other hand, prioritized the self above culture and relationship. The accounts of these women reflect the themes of the early feminists

like Lucy Stone. Foss and Edson report women in this category “consistently state that they want to ‘maintain’ or ‘not lose’ their personal identities and that they simply ‘like their names’” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p.363). Maintaining their individuality and sense of independence is important. Keeping their birth name symbolizes they are still the same people, each an independent person whose identity has not been subsumed by the husband and the marriage. Relationship and culture themes were independent themes as well, without a ranking. The name decision these women made reflects their view of egalitarian relationships; where neither name is lost, both are equal. Regarding the cultural theme, these women were reacting to what has been called the patriarchal nature of marriage. They rejected the stereotypes of marriage, and the roles of husband and wife, and they refuse the implied ownership of the wife by the husband reflected in the patronymic naming tradition in American society. The cultural theme statements reflect rejection instead of honoring.

Name-combiners, logically, fall in between name-changers and name-keepers. Often the decision to hyphenate or somehow combine a birth name with the husband’s name is an attempt to balance the marriage and portray that life change, and at the same time not sacrifice their personal identity and relationship with their own family (Foss & Edson, 1989). The three themes compete for priority in the lives of name-combiners. These women don’t want to lose their pre-marriage identity after marriage, whether for professional reasons or because of feminist beliefs, but they also want to portray the change in status from single woman to married woman. They try to balance their sense of self with their relationship, but also understand cultural

expectations that their name change after marriage. One participant in the Foss and Edson study wrote:

I chose to hyphenate because I was nearly 30 when I married, so was quite comfortable with the sound and feel of my birth name. However, I also wanted to demonstrate that I had changed my life when I married. To use my name and his in a hyphenation was the easiest way to accomplish both (1989, p. 365).

This study is a baseline study referenced in most subsequent naming research. The researchers were able to look at women's own words and identify common themes among their accounts. Foss and Edson determined that names and related choices provide information about women's world views, their own identities, philosophies to which the users ascribe concerning relationships, and their role in relationships and the larger society. For example, of the participants in Foss and Edson's study family and parenthood presented as more important to name-changers than name-keepers or name-combiners. Eighty-six percent of name-changers were mothers, but only 59 percent of name-combiners and 53 percent of name-keepers had children (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 361). Given the accounts of the women in the study this statistic should not be surprising.

Related to the Foss and Edson study is Johnson and Scheuble's (1995) cross-generational study, a quantitative analysis of naming practices and influences. Data were collected via telephone interviews. Participants in the main sample had been volunteers in a prior survey concerning long-term marital quality. These individuals were re-contacted and asked to participate in this study. The second sample, called the

offspring sample, were the children of volunteers in the main sample who agreed to a telephone interview. The authors were interested in “the national prevalence of marital naming practices in two generations, the social determinants of naming choices, and the intergenerational transmission of marital naming practices” (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995, p. 725). The data indicated significant factors that correlate with a non-traditional naming choice in both samples to be educational level, career orientation and liberal gender roles (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995). In the older generation the age of the participant as well as the age of first marriage was also significant. Age at first marriage was not significant in the offspring generation. But an influencing factor for daughters in the younger generation was whether or not the mother had made a non-traditional choice about surname. Predictably, daughters whose mothers had made a non-traditional choice were more likely to have made their own non-traditional choice when they married. These characteristics were similar to the characteristics identified in the Foss and Edson study. Foss and Edson, as reported above, identified that issues concerning the self and subverting the dominant cultural paradigm (a belief in liberal gender roles) were more prevalent among women who decided against a traditional naming practice, as also indicated in the Johnson and Scheuble study summarized here. It is reasonable to expect that if the participants in this study were allowed the opportunity to explain their reasoning at the time of deciding whether to keep their own name, combine it with their husbands’ or change completely, they would give accounts like those of the 1989 study.

In a more recent study Suter (2004) looked at the role of tradition in name choice by Catholic women. Virtually all of the women in this study adopted their

husbands' names after marriage; it was in fact a requirement for participation. Data were collected through individual interviews and small focus groups. The volunteers were asked about what they considered when making the decision (if they had in fact considered the decision at all), and were also asked how they might advise their own daughters about marital naming choices. Suter found tradition was a determining factor in some of these women's lives, but not all.

Her volunteers were broken into cohorts based on when they were married; the first cohort was married before the 1970s and the second wave of feminism, the second cohort was married during the 1970s and 1980s, and thirdly those married in the 1990s, at time when American feminism was experiencing a backlash.

Those married before the 1970s admitted to not really thinking about their name choice, because that was just what was done at the time. This makes sense when it is considered that it wasn't until 1972 that the Maryland Supreme Court ruled that the common law practice of a woman keeping her birth name upon marriage was permissible.

The group married during the second wave of feminism did not report tradition as the reason they chose to change their name. Suter places their reasons "in terms of a personal choice, identity issues, and/or as a necessary reaction to administrative realities" (Suter, 2004, p. 72). Although Suter posits that these women used personal choice as the reason, no examples of statements are provided to support this claim. Upon examination it may become apparent that although it was personal choice, these women were choosing to uphold the tradition for personal reasons. Just because they thought about the choice of a last name and chose the traditional option does not mean

that culture and tradition were not at play. An explanation of the differences between studies may be as simple as a different understanding of operational definitions.

The most recently married cohort displayed an upswing in appealing to tradition as a factor in their decision. The women in this group who saw themselves as having a surname option claimed to have made the choice for personal reasons, not tradition. Those who did not see other options claimed tradition as the reason for their naming choice. Suter summarizes their comments as “if participants did not feel they had any option other than to change their name, they appealed to tradition... if a woman perceived herself to have had options...she did not make an appeal to tradition to explain her naming choice” (2004, p. 75).

Whether the women claimed tradition as the reason for changing their name, or personal choice, one over-riding theme was present: “...the data suggest it is the case that they [the women in the study] are against nontraditional naming forms because they are seen as signifiers that one is a feminist or anti-traditional” (Suter, 2004, p. 76). The women in this study saw anti-traditional practices as synonymous with feminism, and feminists as hostile toward the customs they value, as anti-family and anti-homemaker, an occupation many of the subjects claimed. These women reject the identity of feminist. The identities and accounts of the women in this study coincide with the name-changers in the Foss & Edson study. They rank culture and relationship above the self, and do not claim feminism as a philosophy or value system, although some expressed support of feminist issues such as equality in the workplace.

None of the above-referenced studies specifically address whether a woman’s naming choice is a rhetorical act, the behavioral manifestation of making a rhetorical

statement. But there seems to be ample reason to look at this practice through the lens of rhetoric. When the actions of historical figures are studied they are interpreted as rhetorical acts. As Suter (2004) points out “In the mid to late 1800s, pioneering American feminists, such as Lucy Stone, fought to expose the misinterpretation of common law through their own life examples...” (p. 57). The act of keeping her name after marriage was one way in which Ms. Stone hoped to influence those around her to see her as an equal with her husband, to influence the legal practices of the time, and to live her life according to how she thought the world should be. As far back as a century and half ago women were fighting for equality and expressing their desire in any way they could imagine. For example, Lucy Stone not only kept her name after marriage, but she also spoke publicly for the abolitionists and suffragists, and insisted on wearing bloomer style dresses that reflected the masculine mode of dress- pants. Stafford and Kline (1996) concluded, “the surname decision reflects a conception of tradition, marriage, family and identity” (p. 91). Studying marital naming choice as a rhetorical act will add depth to our understanding of women’s choices, views of themselves and the world around them.

Many times reasons for rhetoric are “grounded in religious beliefs, history, or cultural values, in associations and metaphors, in hunger, resentments, or dreams” (Campbell & Huxman, 2003, p. 5). The issue of women’s rights and fighting patronymy- the practice of taking the husband’s surname upon marriage - can be justified as rhetorical reasons based on this list. Whether a woman chooses to keep her name or change it can be grounded in her religious belief, as was the case in Suter’s study, or a cultural value, as was found in the Johnson and Scheuble case, or a dream,

as it was for Lucy Stone. Foss and Edson (1989) surmise that women constantly make choices about how to relate to their world, a surname choice is one such way.

Investigating the rhetorical reasons for this, and establishing that marital naming is a rhetorical act will increase our understanding of women who make the choice to go against tradition and make a statement about who they are and what they believe.

Given that so many messages all around us about work and family and the role of women being focused on the home and family it seems appropriate to collect the messages others are sending concerning women and their role in the world (Suter, 2004). The research presented has demonstrated that women who keep their name after marriage tend to be more egalitarian in their views of the role of wife, to believe in non-traditional gender roles, and to engage in non-traditional behaviors such as not becoming mothers and pursuing careers independent of their spouse. These women portray a world-view that rejects the common conservative messages and rhetoric of a woman's place. For these reasons the remainder of this analysis will look at a selection of rhetorical theories, and how they may be used to understand name-keepers acts, philosophies, and their rhetorical message, if such a message exists.

Rhetorical Theory

Feminist theory. Feminist rhetoric is one of the bodies of persuasive action and discourse that can be categorized under the expanded definition of rhetoric, in that rhetorical practice now differs methodologically from the traditional format of an expert lecturing to an audience. Originally the formal rhetoric of the suffragist movement was in line with the traditional form of rhetoric; there was limited understanding of how to form the messages of a social movement. Given that many of

the early feminists were originally involved in the abolitionist movement, it makes sense that the feminist movement would have followed the same formula, with a new spin on the messages. As Campbell (1973) states “rhetoric is usually defined as dealing with public issues, structural analyses, and social action” (p. 405), and the originators of feminist rhetoric were schooled in this school of thought. The first wave of feminism was chiefly concerned with public issues, public criticisms of existing structures and systems, with the aim of gathering social support for these arguments and winning the right to vote. It was also concerned with the personal experiences of women.

In the second wave of the feminist movement the rhetoric is of a more individualistic nature, “with personal exigencies and private, concrete experience and its goal...frequently limited to particular, autonomous action by individuals” (Campbell, 1973, p. 83). Instead of “talking heads” and experts informing the masses of the problems of women in society it is now everyday women coming together to support one another, talk over the issues, and see how others’ experiences coincide with personal experience. Within the feminist movement this format is usually in the form of consciousness-raising groups or support groups (Campbell, 1973).

Women interested in the feminist movement and getting involved attend a consciousness-raising group where the women present talk about how they are feeling, how sexism or gender-discrimination is affecting them personally and how they are fighting back. A newcomer will weigh what has been heard against her own experiences and then fold her conclusions into the context of what she is comfortable with. Women find their own voices and ways to express discontent with their role or

the culture. Campbell and Burkholder (1996) write that “when used symbolically, a stimulus...represents the user’s concept of an object, event, person, condition, or relationship, and that concept indicates an attitude or meaning that another person can perceive, identify, and interpret” (p. 8).

Perhaps the last name used by women who identify as feminist is such a symbolic stimulus used to explicate her position on American marriage, feminism, herself, and wifehood. Discussion of her quandary before marriage, her choice afterward reflecting what she feels and believes about herself, and the message she chose to send with the action combine to form the rhetorical vehicle for passing on her message. For example, in Foss and Edson’s study it appeared that name-keepers were not only reacting to the rhetorical definitions of marriage, wife, and the roles associated with the life changing event, but were also choosing to engage in the rhetorical discussion, reflected in their name choices. The authors summarized “in addition to objecting to the role stereotypes, these women object to the sense of ownership implied by the women changing their names” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 365). What was the rhetorical act to demonstrate this? These women did not bow to tradition and continued to use birth names as symbolic expressions of self and identity after marriage.

The issue of interest here, marital naming, is also widely addressed by feminists to public audiences through media. Stafford and Kline (1996) point out “feminist essays, fiction and poetry have discussed how traditional naming practices denigrate women and reproduce patriarchal culture” (p. 85). Both Foss and Edson (1989) and Stafford and Kline (1996) identify several different mediums used to carry

the message of non-traditional naming choice including essays, books on women's rights, books on marriage, newspaper articles, works of fiction, and poetry. Marital naming and identity was even the subject of the popular cartoon *The Far Side*, drawn by Gary Larson. Use of publicly consumed media is a way to place the rhetorical message in the public eye in a non-threatening manner. As women read, watch, and enjoy the books and essays, the message can be embedded for consideration later, or right then. Placing marital naming in works of fiction and the like make it appear that more women are making the non-traditional choice, mainstreaming it, so to speak. Consumption of these materials by women about to get married could influence their decision on the name to use after marriage. In that way the literature and media become rhetorical tools.

Marital naming would appear to be both an item of rhetorical interest to feminists, as well as a way for a woman to rhetorically express her position on the traditional implications of marriage, the role of a wife, and the rights of women in a more general sense. Taking this stand at the very inception of a new family unit may be important to women because, as Risman (1998) tells us, "it is perhaps in the family and other intimate relationships that gender is still accepted, even ideologically, as a reasonable and legitimate basis for the distribution of rights, power, privilege, and responsibilities" (p. 4). A woman who makes a non-traditional choice is saying that she will not accept the traditional role assigned to her by society, and one might expect that she will not perpetuate the teaching of traditional gender roles to her children, should she choose to have them.

The ideograph. Before we are able to communicate, before we learn to talk, we must learn the labels for the objects, people, feelings, and concepts around us. We cannot talk about or express our thoughts on anything without the necessary vocabulary. Once we learn the language and categories we are off and running. We can differentiate a dog from a cat, a man from a woman, a plant from a table. But we also come to learn that some words are more than words, they are more than the definition we find in the dictionary. In our culture there are certain words and phrases that are not just words, but value-laden concepts. These words exert emotional, social, or political control over those who familiar with them. There are inherent expectations of users, and those the words are applied to. McGee (1980) termed these types of words ideographs. Ideographs are the building blocks of ideologies.

When ideographs are talked about, it is usually in a political context. They are words like “freedom,” “liberty,” or “rights,” and images like the American flag or bald eagle. These are words and icons we are willing to fight for, they engender visceral reactions when threatened. Ideographs of American ideology are “definitive of the society we have inherited, they are conditions of the society into which each of us is born, material ideas which we must accept to ‘belong’” (McGee, 1980, p. 6). Members of a culture are taught the ideographs from an early age; they become embedded in our national identity and woven into the fabric of our national consciousness.

Ideographs not only contribute to national identity, national causes, but can serve a rhetorical purpose. By their very nature they are tools of influence; use of ideographs in argumentation can be strong means of persuasion. Because of their inherent power ideographs are structures used to constrain action and/or to inspire

action. Why are they so powerful and useful as instruments of rhetoric? As was explained previously we learn the language and concepts from an early age, and are conditioned to their significance of ideologies through the vocabulary associated with them. Those ideographs “function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief” (McGee, 1980, p. 4). Ideographs inspire people to join the military, campaign for a cause, vote a certain way, for example. Outside of the political arena and ideologies there are other ideographs, which are not commonly discussed, but are just as powerful as structures that define and confine our lives. Consider the words “wife” or “woman.” Both come attached with established roles, identities, and expectations.

There are as many cultural messages and expectations that go along with the idea of being a woman, or being a wife, as there are ideas surrounding freedom, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The cultural expectations of each gender often dictate what a person does, how that person acts, and even what they believe. How we learn to be girls and boys, men and women, and wives and husbands is a subject of interest to many researchers, but three main explanations have surfaced over the years: biological essentialism, socialization, and the idea of “doing gender.” These concepts have been used at different times to explain the expression and perpetuation of ideographs for gender ideology.

Biological essentialists, so named by Bem (as cited in Risman, 1998), believe that the nature of males and females is inherent in our biological sex, that our gender is a natural part of being female or male. The basic assumption of biological essentialism is that we are men and women because we have to be; it is part of what we are as

males and females. Basic weaknesses in this body of theories soon came to light, however. Biological essentialism could not explain changes in gendered behavior over generations. As it became more permissible for women to work outside of the home, and they won the right to participate more in society and governance, changes in acceptable gender behavior began to surface. Women were gaining a voice in public circles, and the suffragists were bringing to light the common inequalities women as a whole experienced. It became apparent that the assumptions of biological essentialism were being used to perpetuate inequality between the sexes.

Moving beyond biology to explain gender differences, theories of socialization gained in popularity. Socialization is understood to be the processes by which humans are taught appropriate behaviors, demeanors, and activities of their gender; and what it is to be a lady or a gentleman (Risman, 1998). Socialization has been the most popular explanation for gender differences. They are explained to be learned patterns of behavior that become so integrated into the person that they appear to be natural elements of sex. Theories of socialization showed us that we are not gendered beings from birth, but that through everyday interactions we learn how to be girls and boys, men and women. Researchers began to find weaknesses with this over-arching body of theories when socialization could not be used to explain why supposed internally embedded patterns changed over the course of a lifetime. Good little girls grew up to be strong powerful women with no interest in mothering, good little boys grew up to be wonderful, caring fathers who loved spending time with their children and nurturing them.

If biological essentialism was not the answer, and socialization was not the all-encompassing body of work it was thought to be, there was another way of looking at and explaining the production and maintenance of gender. In searching for another explanation West and Zimmerman proposed the idea of doing gender. In their essay the authors posited, “gender is a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125). They questioned the assumption of a natural relationship between biological sex and gender identity, viewing this relationship as more of a cultural imposition than natural occurrence. Sex, they said, is “a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males” (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). Our assigned sex results in placement in a sex category (male or female). Gender, on the other hand, is what we do to validate our placement in a sex category, we “do gender.” Gendered activity is, as West and Zimmerman put it, part of a performed essential nature “what is produced and reproduced is not merely the activity and artifact of domestic life, but the material embodiment of wifely and husbandly roles, and derivatively, of womanly and manly conduct” (p. 146). When we do gender we take on roles, and these roles are defined—at least in part—by the ideographs, the cultural imagery and understandings, of our own particular gender ideology.

In general, a woman who ascribes to a traditional gender ideology will behave in one way, while a woman who believes in a more egalitarian gender ideology will do gender in a different way. A reality that has to be admitted is that there is a dominant

cultural gender ideology in society, so there are general cultural expectations of how American men and women will perform their roles. No matter what individuals believe, they will be judged based on a more general scale. Risman (1998) explains, “cultural expectations...become parameters for actions...” (p. 32). To a certain extent the expectations of men and women dictate what we will do. It is the path of least resistance, and often where opportunity lies. Because of this sometimes people will do gender according to social expectations rather than personal truth so as to not be judged harshly, or just to make life easier. In the workplace it is acceptable for a woman to take family leave to care for a newborn, or an aging parent, even if a father would like to take the time to be home with the newborn or family member. It is expected that a woman will take this time out of her career. It is harder for a man to take this time, it goes against cultural expectation, despite the fact that it is no longer necessary for a mother to stay home to feed a baby, with the technology of breast pumps and bottles ever present and available. But to do anything other than the expected is to reject the ideograph.

Little girls, for the most part, expect to grow up to be wives, and through observation and seeing wives around them doing gender, learn what a wife is. A wife takes care of her husband and children, keeps the home clean, prepares the meals, among a million other tasks, as well as takes her husband’s last name. In our social world to be a wife is a coveted role, an achievement of adulthood. What most do not realize, however, is that “marriage and other intimate relationships provide arenas in which [gender] ideologies are played out” (Greenstein, 1996, p. 586). Berk labeled families “gender factories,” and Greenstein agrees with this depiction of families and

marriage. He maintains that marriage provides men and women with the opportunity day in and day out to validate their identities as men and women, by doing gender, and to demonstrate their gender ideologies in observable ways. If it is true that marriage is a concentrated environment for gender ideologies to be enacted then it is reasonable to expect that decisions made on the first day of marriage provide clues to the gender ideologies that will be enacted throughout the course of the marriage.

A key means by which a wife demonstrates her gender ideology is when she decides what last name she will use after marriage. It is expected that a wife will take on a reflective identity and adopt the use of her husband's last name (Risman, 1998), and at least 95 percent of women honor this tradition. Risman explains that many women adopt a husband's last name because humans often act in accord with culturally sanctioned patterns, without thought to the implicit support of "wifehood", and all that entails. On the other hand, when asked, name-changers report their decision to be validation of the wife ideograph, as was found in Foss and Edson's study, "their accounts [name-changers] about their names reveal a picture of how these women view marriage as a cultural institution. They clearly see marriage as a prescribed role into which individuals step" (1989, p. 361). Name-changers report that they are validating and obeying cultural expectation by taking their husbands' surnames. Name-keepers accounts told the opposite story. Their accounts showed a out-right rejection of the prescribed role and institution of marriage:

"Several [name-keepers] mentioned that keeping their names was in part motivated by the desire to make a political statement against the traditional view of marriage; another used even stronger language in describing the

politics of keeping her own name as ‘thumbing her nose at outmoded tribal rituals’” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 365).

These decisions, when actively considered, are not arbitrary. According to West and Zimmerman (1987) our actions are often done with the intention of their accountability, how others will interpret these actions. Specifically in relation to gender performance they believed that “doing gender consists of managing such occasions so that... the outcome is seen and seeable in context as gender-appropriate or...gender-inappropriate, that is, accountable” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 134). Actions that do not seem in opposition to the traditionally conceived ideograph are unremarkable, and therefore do not need explanation. Those actions that do seem to subvert the traditional gender ideographs do seem to need justification and explanation. This could explain why some women choose to keep their own name after marriage; so that when asked why they are given the opportunity to explain their opinion on naming, marriage, wifehood, and all of the topics that tie into the traditional gender ideology of their culture.

Rhetorical situation. In 1968 Bitzer published an article claiming that rhetorical action and choice is based in the situation that causes rhetoric to be necessary. In other words, rhetoric cannot exist without the situation that lends it context and necessity. In his own words, “so controlling is situation that we should consider it the very ground of rhetorical activity” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 4). Bitzer posited that any discourse or action was in response to a situation created by an exigence. This exigence initiates the need for rhetorical action. He said, “every rhetorical situation in principle evolves to a propitious moment for the fitting rhetorical

response” (p. 10). A situation becomes rhetorical when a need for response becomes necessary and critical. The denial of women’s right to vote necessitated the need for the rhetoric of the suffragist movement, the segregationist rules on buses in the South in the first half of the twentieth century called for Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat on the bus; and it is conceivable the situation engendered by marriage requires a rhetorical choice on whether a woman changes her name or keeps her name in response to the cultural exigence.

Bitzer (1968) identified at least three ways in which situation and rhetorical action are linked: when the situation causes a need for response it is rhetorical and the response is rhetorical; the response (action) is significant because of its relation to the situation; and finally the situation simply must exist for the action to be rhetorical. This is all because, as has been stated before, rhetoric cannot exist for its own sake, it is significant because of the context in which it occurs, and to what it is responding. When an American woman gets married she is faced with a choice regarding her name. The situation of marriage may be rhetorical to some women, because by getting married it forces them to act, to possibly make a rhetorical statement through their choice of name.

Method

Human beings, natural storytellers, reveal many of their motivations and inspirations in the accounts they give of their actions. When asked “why?” people are offered the opportunity to explain the reasons considered resulting in their decision to act or believe one way or another, to put into words what they really wanted to portray while at the same time clarifying their actions to themselves and others. Listening to

the stories of other people is like looking through a window into their lives, the narratives people tell of personal decisions and actions “enable us to understand the actions of others...” (Fisher, 1984, p. 8). Hearing from them their intent, and all that was considered before acting informs of us their personal beliefs, reveals aspects of a person’s ideology.

Walter Fisher believed that humans are storytellers, stories being a primary mode of communication for our species, and a form of rhetoric. According to Fisher, to be storytellers means that

...symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, in communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one’s life (Fisher, 1984, p. 6).

We use stories to explain our actions, to persuade others that our decisions are rational and appropriate for the situation that caused the action to be necessary, and we use these communications to inspire others that our way of thinking and believing is right, to demonstrate that they should join us in our communities and ways of thinking. Stories, narratives, can be useful tools of rhetoric- especially for issues of interest to women. As was mentioned earlier a common way for feminists and women to communicate is to tell and listen to stories and then to weigh them against personal experience. Analysis of the narratives serves to examine the content of the stories and resulting acts, and explain how they occur (Campbell & Huxman, 2003). The hope is that the stories will ring true with the listener and inspire action in synch with the goals of the community.

The study of narratives for rhetorical content, and evidence that the act described was a rhetorical act, was the method employed for the current study. This methodology was similar to that employed in Foss and Edson's study, where they studied written accounts of women concerning their name choice with that belief that accounts are how we convey our stories and reveal how we process, understand and interpret our worlds (Foss & Edson, 1989). It was expected in this study that the written accounts provided by participants would reveal the factors influencing the women's decision to keep their names after marriage, and communicate elements of their gender ideologies and membership in communities, whether cultural, philosophical, or other.

Participants were asked to write their narratives instead of communicating them orally so that there is as little influence by the researcher as possible. Asking for written accounts was undertaken to limit exposure to questions from the researcher that could have inadvertently shaped the direction of the narrative or conversation. It eliminated the influence of non-verbal communication, specifically flowing from the researcher to participant that again could shape the form of the participants' narratives. If clarification of the narrative is needed the researcher was able to contact the participants either via the telephone or e-mail, if the participant was willing to provide clarification after submitting the narrative. This proved to be unnecessary.

The current study extends the research of Foss and Edson with the use of a less structured instrument. This method differed from that of Foss and Edson in that in the 1989 study participants answered specific questions, which, as the researchers said, were not necessarily those accounts the women gave in their everyday lives, the

responses were tailored to answer specific questions (Foss & Edson, 1989). It was hoped that a single broad directive statement would have less influence on the narrative given than those elicited by a series of tailored questions and would result in a narrative more closely resembling the story the woman would tell in her everyday life. The methodology for analysis of the narratives was informed by the information collected. The narratives were at first considered as a whole, looking for themes and other commonalities. The primary methodology involved close textual analysis informed by narrative theory, McGee's (1980) ideograph, Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation, and feminist theory. A secondary source of information was identified and utilized during the analysis stage of this study. A discussion concerning naming took place on the WMST-L list serv in February 2005. The postings from this exchange of participants, a public source, were analyzed and used as needed in the analysis of the data provided for this study.

Participant Directions

Each participant was mailed and e-mailed the following direction to provide a written account of their decision to maintain their birth name after marriage:

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of the research for my Master's thesis. I truly appreciate you taking the time to participate in this important research project. Please write an essay of any length telling the story of how it came to be that you chose to keep your birth name after marriage instead of assuming the use of your husband's name after marriage. Do not be concerned about length, the essay may be as long or short as you feel it needs to be. You may return your narrative to me in any of the following methods:

U.S. Mail: Becky Ebeling, 82 Ivy Street, 3rd Floor, Providence, RI 02906

E-mail: 1bnlfan@cox.net, please use the subject line Birth Name Essay

After submitting an essay each participant was sent a short demographic survey that was used to identify avenues for further research, and to add to understanding of the participants as a whole. The demographic survey asked:

Age (please circle one): 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50+

Age at marriage:

How long have you been married?

Ethnicity:

Highest Level of Education Completed:

Informed Consent

Each participant was guaranteed anonymity upon agreeing to take part in the study. An informed consent form, to protect both the researcher and participants, was included with the directive statement. In terms of confidentiality, the participants were told: Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. All records will be secured and will not be released to anyone but the researcher. Results will be reported in cumulative form. Any individual responses used in the reporting of data will be coded by pseudonym and participant number. At no point will your identity be revealed for any reason. Your confidentiality will be protected.

Participants

Five women were invited to participate in the study and agreed. Upon agreeing to participate and project proposal approval from the University, each participant was sent the direction statement and informed consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Rhode Island. The IRB approval (HU0405-098) is on file with The Research Office at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, RI.

There were four criteria for participating in the study: the woman must have always used her birth name as a surname after marriage, she must have been married no earlier than 1973, must still be married, and the current marriage must be her only marriage. All participants met these requirements.

The criteria were set to eliminate certain confounding factors. Participants would not have been married before the Maryland Court of Appeals ruled that women could maintain use of their own name after marriage. The criteria of requiring that she still be married and only married one time kept the factors considered similar, i.e. she will not have opted to keep her name before the marriage because it is the name of any children's father from a prior marriage.

The participants submitted demographic surveys and the following was reported: Three of the participants were over the age of 50 as of March 1, 2005. One was in her forties, and the fifth in her thirties. Two of the participants had earned a PhD, two had a Master's Degree, one had completed three years of graduate school work. Four of the participants identified as white/Caucasian, and one declined to provide her ethnicity. The participants had been married 30 years, 21 years, nine

years, eight years, and seven years. Their age at marriage ranged from 26 years old to 42 years old.

Conclusion

It had been argued here that a woman who chooses to keep her last name after marriage does so as a rhetorical act, when it is understood that rhetorical action encompasses more than formal argument and speech acts. If a broader interpretation of rhetoric is accepted an entire world of persuasive acts opens up to the researcher. The platitude that actions speak louder than words is especially appropriate in this case. One who “walks the walk” is said to have more influence than one who “talks the talk.” Great orators are important to a movement and a cause, but so are actions that accompany the words.

Prior research suggests that women who make a non-traditional marital naming choice do so for varied reasons including not wanting to part with the identity they have formed in the years prior to marriage, rejecting the traditional view of wife and wifehood, and as a reflection of feminist values. The area of marital naming has been studied with questions of identity and the loss of identity, factors of influence, and the role of tradition and cultural expectations (Foss & Edson, 1989; Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Stafford & Kline, 1996). A specific direct study of marital naming choices as rhetoric had not been undertaken.

According to Campbell (1973) feminist rhetoric is commonly communicated in a more non-traditional form, through storytelling, conversation, and grassroots organizing. Rhetorical action in the feminist movement is not only speaking out against or for an issue, but is demonstrating gender ideology in her relationships and

everyday life, expressing her belief in egalitarian relationships. Feminist rhetoric, where content is concerned, has since its inception been concerned with gaining equality for women, including the right to her own identity and rights during wedlock. For these reasons it was expected that the written accounts of participants would reflect acceptance of feminist values, and will show that keeping a birth name is a rhetorical act intended to demonstrate feminist values of not losing the self after marriage, while at the same time claiming a feminist identity.

Dovetailing with the feminist rhetoric aspect is the expectation that these women's accounts will also portray active rejection of the wife ideograph. McGee's (1980) ideograph theory suggests that certain words in American language are, in effect, value-laden concepts with expectations and roles attached. It was argued above that the ideographs that constitute the basis of an ideology shape behaviors of individuals, and while McGee's theory primarily addresses ideographs of political ideologies it was demonstrated that there exist also cultural ideographs such as "woman" and "wife." Women who reject the dominant cultural definition of a wife may choose to first actively reject the traditional gender ideology by not adopting her husband's name after the wedding. Therefore it was predicted herein that the narratives provided by the participants would reflect a desire to express denial of the expectations of traditional wifehood, and all that accompanies the role of wife. The data collected supported the expectations laid out above, as will be detailed in the following sections.

Chapter 2

Analysis/Discussion

The written accounts submitted by the study participants were analyzed for recurring themes. Several themes consistent with previous studies were apparent across the collection of accounts. Reoccurring themes included: name and identity/reputation being linked reflecting a value of individual identity, pride in cultural or familial heritage, a view of the role of Mrs. X as undesirable, a reflection of personal values as relates to marriage, independence, individuality, and the desire to differentiate the self from the crowd.

Name and Individual Identity

The most apparent theme represented in the narratives was the idea that these women had solidly established individual identities before they were married. Their names were equal to those identities, and to change their name would be tantamount to abandoning that identity, that person, for something new. This was a sacrifice they were unwilling to make. The choice to keep their name was a statement of “this is who I am, have always been, and will always be.”

One participant, Ms. Collins [pseudonyms used], wrote, “My name was MY NAME” to partially explain what was behind her choice upon marriage. This shows a clear attachment to her name, and the view that it is not disposable, something to be traded in for something newer and better. Explicating more specifically, Ms. Darcy wrote “I could not imagine who I would be if I was not Darcy.” Her name is synonymous with who she is. She furthered her explanation with the statement that her “name is as much my identity as my reputation.” This comment demonstrates that her

name is as much who she perceives herself to be (identity), as it is who others perceive her to be (reputation). These women were well established personally and professionally when they married, and to change their names would have been to lose all that was identified with that person.

These findings coincide with Foss and Edson's conclusions in 1989. In that study it was concluded that women who keep their names after marriage ranked the self above the other themes that emerged in that analysis. Cultural or societal expectations meant less to name-keepers, and the relationship was secondary to the self. As the authors stated, name-keepers "consistently state they want to 'maintain' or 'not lose' their personal identities and that they simply 'like' their names" (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 363). In the Foss and Edson study as well as in the current study it was not important to the name-keepers that they have the same name as their partners to reflect the relationship, nor was it important to them to follow cultural tradition. Their own identity and values superceded the demands or expectations of others.

Campbell addressed this threat to loss of self, the threat of your very existence, which is how name-keepers feel about the threat to their identities if they change their name. According to Campbell (1973) the "only effective response to the sensation of being threatened existentially is a rhetorical act that treats the personal, emotional, and concrete directly and explicitly..." (p. 81). Name-keepers' rhetorical response to their existential threat is to keep their own name, their identity, after marriage. They will continue to exist, marriage will not have changed them and they will not be lost to the world and subsumed by their husband. Ms. Darcy will still be Ms. Darcy after marriage, she does not have to imagine who should would be, or create that person.

These women have made the rhetorical choice to maintain their pre-marriage persona. The simple act of continuing to use their birth names is to have continuity of their symbolic representations, and demonstrate their desire not to be seen as someone else after marriage.

A recent discussion on WMST-L, a list serv for faculty members in women's and gender studies, addressed the topic of surname choice among women, and in this case, self-identified feminists. The discussion postings brought to light an interesting aspect of the "identity" theme as it relates to women's last name choice, and it echoed both the statements in the narratives for this study, and Foss and Edson's findings of self ranking above relationship and societal expectation. The women in the list serv discussion were struggling with loyalty to the feminist movement while also making a choice and creating an identity that is truly their own. One woman posted, "It is about actually claiming my own identity, creating my own name and place in the world, and asserting my independence and individuality...not about assuming my husband's name and forsaking my own." The postings showed an apparent privileging of individual choice over societal and cultural concerns. This can be interpreted as ranking the self and one's representation of that self above other concerns. It may also highlight a new approach to naming in an evolving feminist movement. When it first began in earnest in the 1970s, name-keeping was revolutionary, a marker of feminism. An acquaintance of the researcher commented that no self-respecting feminist would have ever taken her husband's name in the 1970s. The comments on the list serv indicate a new take on naming: individual freedom. As another participant on the list serv said herself, young overtly-feminist women are choosing to change their name

after marriage having given the matter a lot of thought. She continued, saying that young women's "rationales for name-changing [are] deeply rooted in contemporary interpretations of feminist principles." The discussion on the list serv highlighted how women now feel they have a choice in name, and that in and of itself is revolutionary.

Name and Professional Reputation

The women who participated in the current study were all invested in their work and professional careers. Having previously established a professional identity and reputation in their respective fields was a factor in their decision making process. To change their name was to risk losing their standing in their fields, or to cause confusion where it was unnecessary.

Ms. Bingley highlighted this theme in her explanation with the statement "at work there would be no need to correct people if they called me 'Bingley' or to explain to them I had married..." By citing the convenience of not changing her name in the professional setting Ms. Bingley demonstrates a separation between her personal life and her professional life, and the importance of her professional identity. It appears that she did not want to have to explain her personal situation or relationship status. The reputation she had established before being married would remain intact. Naturally there were colleagues who knew she was married, but to much of the outside professional world she remained the same "Bingley." Name keeping protects professional reputations and may help to manage expectations in the workplace. The self that Ms. Bingley chooses to project through her surname demonstrates a valuing of her professional self, and a link between her private and professional identities. Ms. Bingley's public and professional persona is intertwined with her personal persona.

Ms. Gardner echoed Ms. Bingley's sentiments when she wrote "Established in academia as Gardner when I did marry, I saw no need to change my name..."

Similarly Ms. Darcy wrote "I was 34 when I married my husband. I had...worked hard to establish my career." Again, this theme mirrors the findings of Foss and Edson, who in their findings surmised, "the maintenance of separate professional identities is another major reason for women to keep their birth names" (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 363). The citation of importance of professional identity points to a fear of losing standing in their careers and in the professional realm. These women chose to prioritize their personal investment in career, their individual self, over the societal norm and expectation that they change their name after marriage.

Foss and Edson (1989) elaborated on this theme with the report that several of their participants "...had established careers when they married and thus had publications and other accomplishments in their birth names" (p. 363). The trend of women who have established careers and professional identities keeping their own name is not unique to the Foss and Edson study. Twenge (1994) reported that women who planned to keep their surnames after marriage identified the importance of their names to their careers as a reason for the decision. The findings of the current study and these additional studies show that both conditions of protecting the professional identity and satisfying the cultural norm are not possible in name-keepers' minds, and so they choose individual privilege over cultural expectation.

Pride in Cultural and Familial Heritage

Several of the participants' essays conveyed a pride in their culture and in their families that none wanted to lose. To these women their own cultures and families

were more important than the American cultural expectation that they change their names after marriage. These women do not want to lose their individual identities, but they also enjoy being associated with a particular community, whether familial, cultural, or ideological. Membership and identification with this community is a part of their individual identity.

Identification with a cultural heritage and tradition was among the most common reasons used by participants in this study to explain the decision to keep a birth name. The reasons ranged from “I like having an ethnic sounding name” to “...it’s obviously Irish so there are few questions of my heritage” to “our joke is that he is 100 percent Irish and I am 100 percent French-Canadian.” To suddenly have a surname other than their own, a name that does not reflect their own cultural identity, was to erase a part of their individual identity. To adopt a name that does not reflect their own cultural heritage is equal to being an imposter, pretending to be something they are not. Ms. Bingley, who is proud of her Irish heritage, was reluctant to take on her husband’s German last name. Ms. Bennett did not want to lose the identity of being 100 percent French-Canadian by taking her husband’s 100 percent Irish last name. Their cultural heritage is intertwined in their individual identities, impossible to separate out. Twenge’s study found “women who wish to keep or hyphenate their names are more likely to be immigrants or women of color...” (Twenge, 1994, p. 427). This reinforces the importance of cultural heritage to name-keepers. Foss and Edson (1989) also found an allegiance to family and culture present in name-keepers reasoning, summarizing, “the ethnicity of a family name is also important” (p. 363).

Familial tradition was also a factor in naming decisions. Ms. Darcy wrote about community membership and being one of the Darcy women. To give up Darcy as her surname would be to lose membership in that circle. She wrote, “All through my childhood, my paternal grandmother would speak about the strength and tenacity of ‘The Darcy Women’ – a group in which I always wanted to count myself a member.” Darcy’s identification with the women in her family proved to be more important to her than taking on membership within her husband’s family. She is one of three sisters, and proud to be one of three “Darcy sisters.” None of the sisters have changed their last name through the marriage and life changes they’ve experienced, so to have changed her name she would have betrayed family tradition. Ms. Bingley, while proud of her Irish ancestry, also chose to keep her name out of familial pride. She and her husband even gave her surname to their son when he was born so that the Bingley name would continue into another generation, especially given that their son is the only male child in her extended family at this point.

Prior studies had demonstrated that name-changers take on their husbands’ last names to identify that they have left their family and joined a new one, or to show the creation of a new family unit (Foss & Edson, 1989; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Stafford & Kline, 1996). Membership in a family and cultural tradition are weighed when name-keepers maintain use of their own birth-name and when considering their decision. As Twenge (1994) makes clear, one of the most common reasons given for keeping a name after marriage is “especially the identity of one’s own family” (p. 424). A commitment to culture and family obviously plays a role in these women’s lives, a commitment they choose to emphasize and reflect in their lives

and identities, even when they move into a life of their own with a partner in marriage. The accounts provided for this project are similar in the assertions cited in the previous studies.

Mrs. X an Undesirable Role

It was proposed earlier that women who continue to use their birth name after marriage are rejecting the traditionally conceived ideograph “wife.” McGee’s ideograph theory highlights the existence of words that are value-laden concepts that serve as the foundation of ideologies. When considering ideograph theory and the rhetorical actions of name-keepers it is important to remember that ideographs “exist in real discourse, function clearly and evidently as agents of consciousness...they come to be a part of the real lives of the people whose motives they articulate” (McGee, 1980, p. 5). In society at-large ideographs are taught –explicitly as well as implicitly – to citizens so that they can function as agents of the society, fully invested members of the culture. The ideographs serve to define appropriate behaviors, roles, rules, values, and to preserve the society’s future. They outline what is acceptable and what is not. Ideographs are “definitive of the society we inherit, they are conditions of the society into which each of us is born, material ideas which we must accept to ‘belong’” (McGee, 1980, p. 6). As long as the ideographs are taught and perpetuated a society is assured of the survival of what is deemed to be right and true. This theory has traditionally been applied to the political arena, but operates in other facets of American culture and ideologies. Much control over the American society is exercised in the perpetuation of “gendered” behaviors. As long as men and women continue to do gender as traditionally conceived the status quo is maintained. Risman (1998)

explained, “cultural expectations...become parameters for actions, much like physical constraints...” (p. 32). Two individuals come with their own ideas of gender and a specific gender ideology, and enter the institution of marriage. These ideologies are fraught with ideographs, which will dictate the behaviors of the individuals and their expectations of their partners, sometimes without their awareness. A woman who enters with a traditional idea of marriage and the roles of husband and wife will have different expectations of herself and her husband than a woman who holds a more non-traditional view of marriage and husbands/wives. Greenstein (1996) reminds us, “gender ideologies are how a person identifies herself or himself with regard to marital and family roles that are traditionally linked to gender” (p. 586). It was argued herein that a woman’s opinion of what it means to be a wife is a cornerstone of her gender ideology, and that her surname choice is an indicator of her gender ideology. It was anticipated that name-keepers would show evidence of a non-traditional attitude towards marriage and the role of wife. Foss and Edson (1989) had found this to be true, as they reported, “the accounts offered by the women who kept their names convey their assumptions about the institution of marriage” (p. 365) The narratives provided for this study showed evidence of the same being true.

Ms. Darcy wrote “imagining herself as ‘Mrs. So and So’ always seemed like an escape or a role – not myself.” She knew that to take on the name of Mrs. X would be to step into a role, a role that she did not believe to be a part of who she really is. Ms. Darcy knew becoming that person was to assume the responsibilities assigned to Mrs. X, a role and a person she never expected to become. Ms. Darcy is the mother of two children. She explained that to her children’s caretakers she is sometimes Mrs. X

(assumed by the caretakers); she prefers to be Ms. Darcy. Mrs. X is a role assigned to her by some, but not one she willingly assumes. Her rhetorical choice is to be Ms. Darcy. She specifically highlights the error of her children's caretakers' assumption because it is in direct opposition to the identity she wishes to portray.

Similarly, Ms. Bennett clearly stated that, "at no time did she believe in traditional roles in marriage." To have taken on the name of her husband would have been to participate in a role-system she did not believe in or support. Her husband did not believe in traditional gender roles either, and in fact does many of the tasks normally associated with "wifely responsibilities" including grocery shopping and meal preparation. By remaining Ms. Bennett she was able to express her rejection of that role and the traditional roles of wife and husband. Foss and Edson (1989) found the same theme, saying that when their name-keeping participants talk about marriage relationships the "women with their birth names see it [marriage] as consisting of no longer workable roles and customs." (p. 365). These name-keepers, by refusing to be viewed in the role of "wife," may also be making an effort to re-frame what a wife is. Through their narratives and comments the participants in this study seem to be creating their own roles within their relationships, their own interpretations of wife and husband to have the relationship reflect their version of marriage, and marital roles.

Reflection of Values

Related to the revision of the wife role is the theme of reflecting personal values. Imbedded in these women's value-systems and ideologies, as demonstrated

above, is a belief that they can be married but not have to be a “wife.” Other values came to light as well in the analysis of the accounts.

Ms. Gardner highlighted her value of independence and belief that marriage is a life experience, not a change in status or identity. She did not see a need to change anything when she got married, it did not change her. This statement exhibited her value of self and personal choice above other considerations. Ms. Gardner grew up with the understanding that she would have a professional career and financial independence, not that she would be someone’s wife. Her values reflect that upbringing. Neither she nor her husband deemed it important that they have the same last name, and Ms. Gardner obviously intended to maintain her independence and career after marriage. One gets the feeling from her essay that Ms. Gardner believes in the feminist ideal of equality, and expects it from life and from her relationship. Included in this idea of equality are independent identities and a partnership in marriage instead of traditional roles. This attitude echoed the findings in Foss and Edson’s study where they found that “marriage is not the center of existence but a part of life that has many dimensions, all of which are important to these women” (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 364).

Ms. Bingley also kept her name to demonstrate her values, including her wish to differentiate herself from the traditional women around her. “I like to think of myself as non-traditional, and keeping my own name was a way I could assert my values.” This act of rebellion, going against the norm and the expected, allowed Ms. Bingley to separate herself from those around her. Keeping her name placed her in a unique category, since such a small percentage of women keep their name after

marriage. This gesture confirmed for her and those around her that she was different. As Campbell and Huxman (2003) said, “through their use of symbols, rhetors call up ideas, pictures, and experiences in those they address” (p. 8). The act of keeping her name, going against the traditional ritual of changing her name, placed Ms. Bingley in a category outside of the traditional conception of a married woman, a wife. This act relates back to the ideograph discussion earlier. McGee said, “one is not permitted to question the fundamental logic of ideographs: Everyone is conditioned to think of ‘the rule of law’ as a logical commitment...” (McGee, 1980, p. 5). According to American gender ideology and ideographs a woman changes her name after marriage to signify the change that has taken place, and that she is now a married woman with a new family unit. Those who question the ruling practice are labeled rebellious and possibly feminist. Because she acted outside of the norm, outside of the prescribed behavioral pattern of a newly married woman, Ms. Bingley conveyed and confirmed her non-traditional value system. It was an act of self-definition, a rhetorical act designed to prove her identity to herself and to the people around her.

Individual Themes of Consequence

While much of what was included in the narratives was representative of the themes detailed above, there were instances where an individual narrative included thematic references that are important to this discussion of naming choice and rhetorical action.

Ms. Bennett’s narrative included the statement, “We had met at [University] in 1970, the year after anti-war activities at college campuses closed down many

universities. We began living together in the summer of 197X...This was certainly a time when alternative lifestyles were being explored.”

A part of her explanation of why she opted to continue to use Bennett as her surname after marriage is attributed to the time and environment in which the decision was made. She writes of the 1970s as a time of upheaval, testing limits, and experimenting with non-traditional lifestyles. Before getting married Ms. Bennett and her husband lived together for five years, at the time living together outside of marriage was an alternative lifestyle, less common than it is in the 21st century. When Ms. Bennett and her husband did marry it was more for convenience than to legitimize their relationship and take on the roles of a married couple, as they needed to be married so that Ms. Bennett could travel overseas for an employment opportunity for her husband. The situation in which Ms. Bennett found herself called for rhetorical action.

Bitzer (1968) believed that “situation is the source and ground of rhetorical activity” (p. 4). This means that rhetorical action is taken as a response to a situation, a set of circumstance, in which the rhetor finds herself. Ms. Bennett found herself choosing to get married. Suddenly she was to be a wife, and found it necessary to outwardly demonstrate her rejection of traditional gender roles. Her value system was not necessarily compatible with the traditional assumptions about marriage and marital roles. As she entered into this more traditional arrangement she had to find a way to communicate her non-traditional approach and belief in the system, and began with keeping her surname after marriage.

Bitzer (1968) also said that rhetorical action is “given its significance by the situation” (p. 4). As has been stated repeatedly, it is expected that a woman will change her name upon marriage and take on a reflective name/identity. In the case of name keeping it is given rhetorical significance precisely because of the situation – marriage. Ms. Bennett knew her identity to be closely tied to her name, but found herself to be soon married. Keeping her name served the rhetorical purpose of stating that she had not changed who she was, and that she did not believe in non-traditional roles. In this case marriage was the personal exigence experienced by Ms. Bennett, which called for action. As was highlighted earlier, Greenstein (1996) was of the mind that marriage is the environment in which gender ideologies are played out on a daily basis. Berk (1998) also believed this when she described families as “gender factories.” Ms. Bennett’s placement of her decision in the rhetorical situation of marriage lends credence to these statements.

A third criteria Bitzer identified as integral to the production of situation rhetoric was simply that the situation must exist in order for the discourse or action to be rhetorical (Bitzer, 1968). Obviously if there were not to be a marriage where a name change was expected, then Ms. Bennett’s action could not be rhetorical. Continuing to use her name while not married would not be rhetorical. No accounting for her action would be needed. West and Zimmerman (1987) said, “actions are often designed with an eye to their accountability, that is, how they might look and how they might be characterized” (p. 135). Ms. Bennett knew she would have to explain her decision to people who questioned the non-traditional choice. The situation and accountability of her action made this choice a rhetorical choice.

Conversely, this choice was unremarkable in the social circle in which Ms. Bennett and her husband kept company. She wrote, "Keeping birth names was the norm among our social group, as was living together unmarried." By not changing her name after marriage she sent the message that she was still one of the group, she hadn't changed or abandoned the group's values. Giving this reason as part of the explanation for keeping her name points to an ideology within the group, and to challenge that ideology would have meant exclusion. This too helps to frame Ms. Bennett's choice to keep her name after marriage as a rhetorical choice. She was demonstrating her membership to the other members of her social group. It served to persuade them that she had not abandoned their philosophies or alternative lifestyle choices by getting married. It is the flipside of accountability. She did not have to explain her choice to members of her social group, because it fell into the category of unremarkable. As West and Zimmerman (1987) said, some actions are "undertaken so that they are specifically unremarkable and thus not worthy of more than a passing remark, because they are seen to be in accord with culturally approved standards" (p. 135).

Another theme of community extended beyond Ms. Bennett's immediate circle. Ms. Bennett views women who keep their names after marriage as members of her community, even if they are not from her social circle, and believes them to have similar values to her own. She wrote, "When I hear that a male co-worker's wife has kept her name I usually react with more interest in knowing her. To me this decision implies that she has an identity separate from her husband." This comment harkens

back to her statement that her identity was her own and not to be given up, but also shows that she views fellow name-keepers as comrades.

Ms. Bingley's essay also presented certain themes that are of interest, coincide with previous studies, but were not demonstrated across the collection of narratives. Foss and Edson (1989) cited that name-changers often say that they took their husbands' names because of the convenience of it. These women believe that it eliminates confusion if they have the same last name as their husband and children. Name-keepers in Foss and Edson's study also used the convenience theme to explain their choice. In that study the participants valued "the convenience of their name choice... 'it was more practical to keep my name for record reasons'" (Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 363). Ms. Bingley cited the convenience of not having to change over all of her personal documentation as one of the reasons she chose to keep her name, as did the name-keepers in Foss and Edson's sample. She said, "It would make for no paperwork, such as new credit cards or a new license..." She also referred to the lack of confusion of a name change in the workplace. While many women are aware of the confusion a name change will entail, they believe it to be worth it. Ms. Bingley did not want to have that confusion, nor to have to explain that she had gotten married to people in her professional world.

Related to the theme of convenience, Ms. Bingley highlighted the often-mispronounced surname of her husband. She did not want to go through her married life having to explain how to say her new last name. Early in her narrative Ms. Bingley writes that her birth name is easy to pronounce, and later explicitly states that by keeping her name she "wouldn't have a name that was often mispronounced."

While many name-changers say that they take their husband's name because their own was too hard to pronounce (Foss & Edson, 1989), Ms. Bingley used that reasoning to justify keeping her name. From her point of view it would be more convenient for her to not have to correct people and explain why she did not change her name than it would be to take her husband's name. It may also be construed that one's identity could be connected to the correct pronunciation of one's name. For a person, like Ms. Bingley and others in this sample, for whom their name is an important key to their identity, it would make sense to ensure correctness in this area.

The original impetus behind this study was to determine if a selection of name-keepers' decisions to keep their names after marriage was a rhetorical choice, a reflection of values and desire to be perceived in a certain way. It seems evident through the analysis of the narratives that this is the case. The women who participated in this study wanted a continuity of identity after marriage. Their identities were important enough to them, and so well integrated into their sense of self, that they felt the need to communicate that to the public. The persona they chose to keep at the forefront was one of independent individuals, proud of their cultural and familial heritages and professional accomplishments. The act of name-keeping also serves to communicate their non-traditional views of marriage and gender roles. The participants here voiced their unwillingness to accept the expectations thrust upon Mrs. X, and their aversion to the traditional marital role of "wife."

Findings/Implications

The analysis of the narratives illustrates several points. First and foremost the participants in this study included reasoning in their essays that demonstrates that surname choice, for these name-keepers, was a rhetorical choice and a rhetorical act. This study was undertaken with the hypothesis that a decision based on a belief in a position, cause, value, or philosophy was a rhetorical choice, and the action taken a rhetorical act. The action is undertaken to “alter perception, to explain, to change, reinforce, and channel belief, and to initiate and maintain actions” (Campbell & Huxman, 2003, p. 11). The statements in the essays of these women show their intent to alter perceptions of what a wife can be, reinforce their identities to themselves and to others, and to channel their beliefs of independence and non-traditional gender roles. The decision to keep their names was the vehicle with which they communicated these messages. The rhetoric of their beliefs and identities was contained in the action of keeping their birth names. In their study Stafford and Kline (1996) stated that the “surname decision reflects a conception of tradition, marriage, family and identity” (p. 91). This is supported by the findings of the current study.

Identity and name have long been believed to be linked. Feminists argue that name is as important to women as to men, and to expect a woman to give up her name at marriage is to expect her to give up a part of herself in the process (Stafford & Kline, 1999). Due to the limitations of this study that particular concern cannot be answered. However, the narratives did provide ample support to the idea that women do have an investment in their identities and a link to their names, and some do keep their names to safeguard that identity. In their study of marital surname intent Intons-

Peterson and Crawford (1985) found two major misperceptions, “that women identify less with their surnames than men and that it is psychologically easier for women to change their names than it is for men” (p. 1170). The evidence provided in these narratives upholds this claim and the feminist claim that women’s identities are important to them, and the option to maintain that identity despite life changes should always be on the table.

The findings of the current study also highlight the many aspects of women’s identities. According to the accounts provided here, these women’s names are the key to their multi-faceted identities. Their names encompass their individual identity and how they know themselves, cultural heritage, familial ties, professional reputations, and views on marriage. Their identities are complex, and integrated into their perception of self. To ask these women to change their names would be to ask them to reinvent who they are, how they present themselves to the world, and to deny certain elements of themselves.

A key text for this study has been the Foss and Edson 1989 study. “What’s In a Name?” provided much of the inspiration and support for the current project. And, although the methodologies differed, it bears mention that the themes of the narratives provided here echoed the themes identified by those researchers 16 years ago. One intent of this study was to see if similar themes would appear in women’s accounts if a more free-form storytelling was allowed. In the original study participants completed questionnaires that shaped their stories. In this study no such direction was provided. Participants were simply asked to tell their story of why those chose to keep their birth names. The current methodology was designed with the intent to get the true everyday

stories of the participants, without accidentally shaping their stories to serve the needs of the researchers. It was successful on this front. However, a drawback to this methodology was that the essays submitted were of varying length and quality. Despite this drawback, the results were fruitful for the purposes of this study and to support the previous findings of Foss and Edson.

Foss and Edson identified a ranking of self above others, a fear of losing a formed identity, commitment to non-traditional marital roles, and a dedication to cultural and familial heritage as reasons women kept their names. They also found that women with established careers were likely to keep their name after marriage (Foss & Edson, 1989). Detailed above was evidence of the same themes provided in the narratives for this study, demonstrated through comments like “my name was MY NAME,” and “...it’s obviously Irish so there are few questions to my heritage,” and “Established in academia as...I saw no need to change my name...” and “...imagining myself as Mrs. So-and-So seemed like an escape or role.” The change in methodology did not affect the themes presented in the original study, lending additional support to Foss and Edson’s results.

The participants of this study showed that they were unwilling to step into the ideographic role of “wife.” These women approached marriage with non-traditional attitudes about the institution of marriage, and the roles associated with it. Instead of refusing to get married because of this refusal, they are creating marriages, roles, and identities reflective of who they are and what they believe. An aspect of the changing face of marriage is two last names in a marriage instead of one. These women see themselves as partners in a relationship, not as stereotypical “wives” to their husbands.

Ms. Gardner's statement "I saw and see marriage as expanding my life experience not changing my identity" best summarizes this attitude.

McGee (1980) wrote, in short, that an ideograph is a "high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable" (p. 11). A "wife" fits into this definition nicely. With the role, in the traditional sense, comes the expectation of performing the bulk of the household work and caring for children and husband. It is a less powerful role than the husband. For a woman to work at a job, as two incomes are now the norm, and to also perform most of the domestic work is acceptable, and even laudable. Greenstein (1996) observed, "Traditional wives do gender by doing most of the housework and by not allowing their husbands to contribute [to the performing of housework]" (p. 588). Traditional husbands and wives use the ideographs to justify unequal distribution of work and power in a relationship. As more women come to view marriage from a non-traditional point of view, and begin to revise the duties and assumptions that accompany being a "wife," a new ideograph in gender ideology could come to dominate American relationships and marriages. Breaking down the expectations of roles in marriage might also have an effect on the fight for the right to marry by same sex couples. If marital roles come to be something other than the "wife" and the "husband," traditional female and male roles, then it is conceivable that the very definition of marriage could change to include two people working in partnership with each other in the relationship, instead

of a woman and a man with children in a family fulfilling prescribed roles and expectations.

Chapter 3

Limitations/Suggestions

There were certain limitations to this study, mainly related to the participants and methodology. Five women were asked to participate and all agreed. The subjects were not randomly selected for participation, although an effort was made to include a variety of women with a variety of perspectives. In the end the group selected was remarkably similar in demographic categories and relatively homogenous.

All five women had completed college and at least some graduate school-work. Two participants had earned a PhD, two had Master's level degrees, and one had completed three years of post-baccalaureate work. Three of the women were older than 50 years of age at the time of the study. This might mean that all three of those women were influenced by the second wave of feminism and came from a similar feminist perspective. Of the remaining two participants one was in her forties and the other in her thirties. Four of the five women identify as white or Caucasian, the fifth woman declined to indicate her ethnicity on the demographic survey. The one element that the women varied on, asked about on the demographic survey, was length of time married. Ms. Bennett had been married the longest, 30 years. Ms. Gardner had been married for 21 years, Ms. Darcy for nine, Ms. Collins for eight, and Ms. Bingley seven years. There were, however, no remarkable differences in their accounts that seemed to result from how long they had been married. In the future it is suggested that more of an effort at diversity in many areas is intentionally built into the subject pool.

Another limitation proved to be the essays that were provided for the study. The longest essay was nearly two pages long, the next longest was nearly a full page,

and the remaining essays limited to one or two short paragraphs. The brevity of the essays was surprising. The researchers had anticipated having more data to work with and were surprised at the shortness of the essays. However, the short essays may also be indicative of the fact that these women did not find their decision to keep their names remarkable, and did not feel that they had many reasons to offer. In fact, one essay began with the disclaimer, “there really isn’t much of a story,” indicating that the choice had either been very easy or completely unremarkable.

It is also possible that the directive prompt, while purposefully vague, was too general to solicit the amount of information that was expected. In the future it might be wise to revise the directive statement to reflect the amount of information being sought from the participants. If repeated it is also suggested that a mechanism for follow-up with the participants be designed. Again, in the current study the researcher did not want to shape the information collected in any way. However, as an extension of the current research it would be advisable to collect further information as needed.

Future Research

Suter (2004) said that the reasons to continue studying women’s naming practices are grounded “in large part because naming practices represent one of the insidious ways patriarchy continues to perpetuate itself” (p. 84). Current traditional naming practices give the appearance of women being subsumed by their husbands’ identities, and the women are thereby lost to the world, establishing the dominance of men and the patriarchal line. It is an element of the construction and enactment of traditional gender ideologies in American culture. This research showed a selection of

women bucking that system so as not to be a part of it. The current project provides interesting direction for future avenues of research.

A good follow-up study would be to analyze the reasons name-changers and name-combiners give when asked why they made the decision they did. The responses should be looked at with an eye toward determining if the name chosen was for rhetorical reasons. If it is determined that name-keepers and name-combiners have made a rhetorical choice an analysis of the themes in their narratives will complement the current study. A studied understanding of representatives in the three populations offers the opportunity for comparison, and better understanding of these women's world-views and gender ideologies. It could also demonstrate the effectiveness of different groups, such as feminists or conservatives, on women in America and their attitudes toward themselves and marriage. It might be interesting to also ask name-changers and combiners if they considered keeping their names, and why they didn't if that had thought about it. Foss and Edson originally compared their findings among the samples of name-keepers, name-changers and name-combiners and identified commonalities and difference. To include the other populations in a rhetorical analysis may yield results as equally fruitful as they found.

Since this study was limited to women in northeastern America it would be logical to next extend the research into other regions of the country and determine if reasons differ across the country. The Northeast is known for being somewhat liberal and educated. The reasons offered by women of the Southeast or Northwest may differ, or may echo what has been found here. As was mentioned above in the limitations of this study, the women who participated were relatively similar to each

other. In future research including more diversity may provide for richer comparison and analysis.

A general understanding of rhetorical intent in naming, how that differs based on demographic criteria such as region in which one resides, education, income level, ethnicity, age, age at marriage, or a myriad of other categories, and relation to ideology will assist scholars in understanding the trends and successes of gender ideologies and political ideologies.

Conclusion

The original intent of this project was to analyze the reasons women give to explain why they chose to keep their name after marriage. The researchers were interested in whether the reasons would reveal that the act of name-keeping was the result of a rhetorical act. They were also interested in identifying themes reflected in the name-keepers' accounts to be used as clues to the women's identities and ideologies.

It was determined that these women did keep their birth name as the result of a rhetorical choice. They were choosing to explicitly and symbolically communicate their pride in their family, culture, individuality, and professional reputation. Participant essays also indicated a general unwillingness to take on the identity of Mrs. X, a person they didn't know and didn't want to become. These women did not want to portray acceptance of a role normally assigned to married women.

Individual themes presented in two of the essays. One participant explained her choice to keep her name in the context of the rhetorical situation she found herself, both in terms of a time of social upheaval and the fact that she was suddenly going to

become a married woman. Another woman expressed the convenience of keeping her name because there would be no need to complete piles of paperwork for credit cards, banks, government identifications, and the like. She didn't think all of the paperwork that would be required to change her name legally was worth taking on her husband's harder to pronounce surname. This theme of convenience is not uncommon in name-keepers accounts. It is also presented in name-changers' accounts, but in terms of the convenience of not having to explain they are married or cause confusion for children to have parents with different last names.

The findings of this study highlighted the complexity of these women's identities and underscored the multi-facetedness of women's identities. These women also made the tie of birth names to identities and professional reputations clear. They were unwilling to part with the person they had become, and their understanding of who they are, is tied to their label-- their name. These narratives supported the findings of previous research, especially the work done by Foss and Edson for their 1989 study on marital naming. While the results of this study are not generalizable to a population beyond this participant group, the evidence presented herein does demonstrate that at least for some women the choice to keep their name after marriage is rhetorical.

Future research should investigate the possibility of rhetorical action in name-keepers and name-changers, the relationship between naming practice and selected demographic categories, ideology, spouse's ideology, and distribution of household labor between spouses. Naming practices as concern children should also be

investigated, as an indication of the hold of patriarchy, matriarchy or other practices on American culture.

The naming practices of married Americans is a fascinating topic that can serve as an indicator of American gender systems and ideologies. I look forward to future research expanding our knowledge of marital naming, trends, and implications.

Appendix

Ms. Bennett

The decision to not take my husband's name when we married was a mutual decision. We both felt that my identity was strongly linked to my name and that I should not change it. [Husband's name] and I had lived together for [number] years and decided to get married in order to travel together with employment [for Husband's name].... Keeping birth names was the norm among our social group as was living together unmarried. We had met at [University] in 1970, the year after anti-war activities at college campuses closed down many universities. We began living together in the summer of 197X...This was certainly a time when alternative lifestyles were being explored.

Not everyone I associate with kept her birth names. My...sister married shortly after she graduated from college, did not live with her husband before marriage, and did not keep her birth name. We never spoke about our different choices.

During...years of marriage I have not questioned that decision and find it interesting that many people either assume that [maiden name] is my husband's name or do not understand why I did not change my name. When I hear that a male co-workers wife has kept her name I usually react with more interest in knowing her. To me this decision implied that she has an identity separate from her husband.

I know many women who have married and divorced and have the dilemma of what to do with their name. Children complicate these decisions. When I make reference to friends who have been through many name changes I find it most comfortable to make reference to them with their maiden name even when they have

not legally used that name for years. It holds more of their identity than does their past or current husband's name.

There are exceptions. Recently a friend took her husband's name after 20 years of marriage. She works with her husband in his construction business that has his name. By taking his name she legitimized her role in the company. An artist by training with many family members in the art world, this was a very difficult decision to give up a family name with close identity to her artwork.

Our sons both have their father's name as a surname, my birth name as a middle name. Having a mother with a different birth name has never been much of an issue for them. In fact they seem to hardly notice. Parents of their friends have taken the explanation of my having kept my maiden name as a reasonable choice.

When I was first married I worked in one private [school] and two public...schools. The exclusive private...school added [husband's surname] to my last name for all mailings. My paycheck came in my birth name. Students in the economically poorer school district felt I was not proving my love for my husband if I did not take his name. In the more affluent...school many of the female students felt they would keep their birth names.

I grew up in [large] family and felt just a little that my older brothers had advantages over me in terms of being able to do interesting things. I was determined to have as many experiences as they did. My father did not have different expectations for his daughter and sons; he expected me to go to the best public high school in the state and then expected me to be an [traditionally male occupation].

At no time did I believe in very traditional roles in marriage. My husband has had the opportunity to spend more time with our sons as they have grown up with him and is very close to them. He also does more domestic chores that I do, most of the grocery shopping and more than half of the cooking.

Our joke is that he is 100% [ethnicity] and I am 100% [different ethnicity] and each of us grew up with our parents making fun of the other's ethnic group.

In retrospect, decisions to not change a name at marriage seems to have more to do with age and having defined an identity with a name.

My husband, a...teacher, thinks the question should be " Why did you change your name when you married?"

Ms. Bingley

I like my name. It seems to fit me, it's easy to pronounce and it's obviously [culture] so there are few questions of my heritage. But I was never so attached as to think that when I married that I would not take my husband's name. When I became engaged to my husband, who happens to have a [ethnic] last name that is always mispronounced...it was he who started to question what I would do about my name. He encouraged me to keep my last name because he genuinely likes my [culture] name.

Once I took some time to think about it, I became pretty attached to the idea of keeping my own name for a number of reasons. It would make for no paperwork, such as new credit cards or a new license, at work there would be no need to correct people if they called me "Bingley" or explain to them that I had married, and I wouldn't have a name that was often mispronounced.

It was also very appealing to me because I like to think of myself as non-traditional, and keeping my own name was a way I could assert my values. This was particularly important to me at that time in my life because I felt surrounded by some judgmental people who were also engaged. While they each claimed to be willing to buck the materialistic, American lifestyle, they were all having elaborate weddings and registering for lots of “stuff”, and they were also changing their last names. Eloping to...(which I did) and keeping my last name was a way for me to differentiate myself from them.

My husband even talked about taking *my* name, however I discouraged that because I liked him having his last name (and the idea of it was actually a bit too non-traditional for me).

We now have a baby who is ten months old, and he is also a Bingley. He has a nice [culture] first name and his middle name is...(my husband's name). We really didn't want to inflict mispronunciation of a difficult [different culture] last name on our son his whole life. Our child right now is the only male Bingley in the extended family and so I like the thought of possibly keeping the name Bingley going beyond my generation.

Ms. Collins

There isn't really much of a story. I never considered changing my name. I like having an ethnic sounding name. I never really thought I wanted to get married. When I finally did I was [age] years old and my name was MY NAME. My future spouse had no problem – I think it came up once when I told him I wasn't interested in

changing my name. Oddly, the only person who objected (and continues to have a hard time with it) is my father whose name I kept. Go figure?!

Ms. Darcy

I don't think that I ever assumed that I would take my husband's name after marriage. All through my childhood, my paternal grandmother would speak about the strength and tenacity of "The Darcy Women" – a group of which I always wanted to count myself a member. Additionally, apart from doodling 'Mrs. Jessie Crabgrass' on school notebooks in grade school to exercise any current crush that I had, imagining myself as Mrs. So and so always seemed like an escape or a role – not myself.

I was thirty-four when I married my husband. I had been through many significant relationships and had worked hard to establish my career. I could not imagine who I would be if I was not [Ms. Darcy]...I was named after both of my grandmothers – very strong women. I also have always been proud to be one of...[Darcy] sisters, all of who have kept their "maiden" names through marriage and life changes. While I am Mrs. [X] to any of my children's care-takers, I much prefer to either be [first name] or Ms. [Darcy]. My name is as much my identity as my reputation.

Ms. Gardner

The reasons I retained my birth surname at the time of my marriage are not particularly complex. I grew up with expectations for a professional career and financial independence. My parents strongly encouraged and supported my goals and never did I hear marriage discussed as a 'career opportunity.' Thus, I saw and see marriage as expanding my life experience not changing my identity. Established in

academia as Gardner when I did marry, I saw no need to change my name nor did my husband consider taking the name, X, important to our relationship/marriage.

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